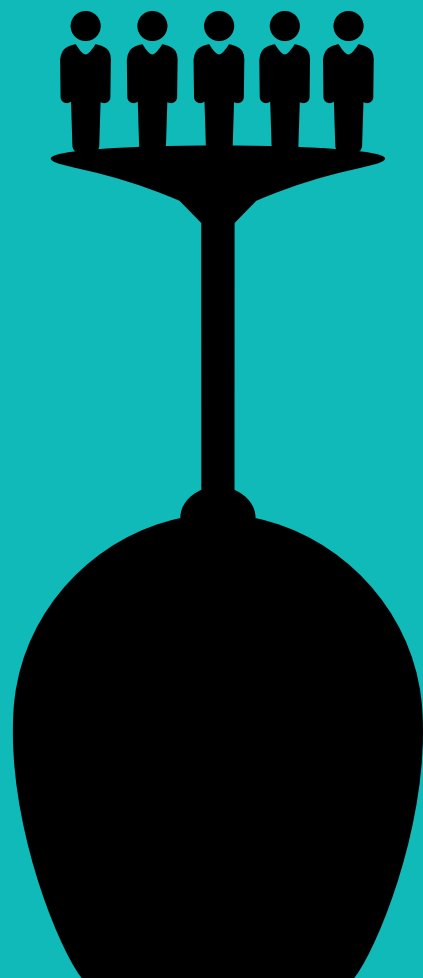




Universities UK

INITIATIONS AT UK UNIVERSITIES



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ED FARMER

LETTER FROM JEREMY AND HELEN FARMER

PARENTS OF ED FARMER

Nothing can ever prepare you for the early morning visit from the police when both your sons are away from home, and with a sixth sense you just know you are going to hear the name of one of your children. Somehow until the 13 December 2016, bad luck had never paid our family a visit, but on opening the door to the officer that morning, it came charging in.

Farming and the rural community in which we work and live was an enormous strength to us, as the changing seasons and weather will make no allowances for anger and self-pity.

The inquest in October 2018 was, as strange as it may seem, an exceptionally positive experience aided by a truly remarkable barrister who through the four days helped us to discard feelings of negativity and blame, instead replacing them with positivity and forgiveness, especially towards the young men who were the organisers of the initiation, all of them having lost the friendship of someone that had intelligence, wit and compassion beyond his years but who is now sadly just a memory.

As time has passed, we appreciate just how difficult it is to affect positive change. Ed was very unlucky; he could so easily have survived, but nothing went his way that night. I do, however, believe that if students were made aware of the dangers of drinking large volumes of spirits in short periods of time, and maybe aware of the signs of someone that is no longer just drunk but in a life-limiting state and use the example of Ed to give the message some relevance, then possibly just one student might be luckier on a night out than Ed.

“Ed was very unlucky;
he could so easily have
survived, but nothing
went his way that night”

FOREWORD

**THREE YEARS AGO
WE LOST A BRIGHT,
TALENTED, MUCH
LOVED STUDENT IN
ONE OF THE WORST
WAYS POSSIBLE.**

Ed Farmer was in his first term with us here at Newcastle with his whole future ahead of him when he took part in, what we now know, was an initiation event. I think there is no doubt it was the situation Ed found himself in that night which led to him drinking an excessive quantity of alcohol over a very short period of time. And this, together with a lack of knowledge from his fellow students about the dangers of drinking to excess, resulted in the most tragic of outcomes.

We all wish we could rewind three years and change what happened that night. But we can't go back and so instead we are looking forward and doing everything we can to minimise the chances of anything like this happening again.

Following the inquest into Ed's death, myself and the academic registrar chaired a Student Initiations Group, with membership including students' union staff and sabbatical officers, relevant faculty and professional service staff, representatives of key student clubs and societies, and alumni representation, in order to consider how to tackle the problem of dangerous initiations and the specific recommendations of the coroner.

This group also consulted and collaborated with external organisations across Newcastle on issues specific to our city.

Together, and with the invaluable support and guidance of Ed's parents, Jeremy and Helen, we have developed a number of recommendations designed to educate and raise awareness about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption and to positively encourage behaviour change among our students.

Universities have a commitment to ensuring a rich and safe student experience. The challenge is to ensure that we do not seek to control student

behaviour while at the same time, making it clear to students that universities are communities in which certain standards and expectations must be upheld to ensure that the experience for students is a safe and inclusive one for all.

We agreed there are two key areas of work to consider when looking to tackle the problem of initiations and related activities. Firstly, to improve institutions' policies and processes, and secondly through health education and behavioural initiatives to promote long-term culture change with regards to alcohol consumption, bullying, harassment and inequality, in the sector.

Although problem initiations which result in serious harm or death are rare, the impact of these incidents is significant and far-reaching across the university community.

Universities are well-placed to drive a change in attitudes toward excessive alcohol consumption and to contribute to overall culture change around harassment and bullying, and I hope that all higher education leaders make a commitment to improving their institutions' policies and processes and to providing a wide-range of initiatives in order to promote long-term culture change regarding this issue.

I am pleased to share Newcastle University's work with the sector and I hope it will support you to develop your own activities and interventions so that together we can mitigate the risk of a tragedy such as this from happening again.



PROFESSOR CHRIS DAY
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

CONTEXT

Ed Farmer was a first-year student at Newcastle University and a member of the Agricultural Society. In 2016, an initiation event was organised by the society, despite both organisers and attendees being aware that initiations were prohibited by the university.

All involved understood the aim of the event to be for first-year students to consume a large quantity of alcohol and to take part in activities such as eating rotten substances and head-shaving.

The first-year students were accompanied throughout the event by second-year students, who actively encouraged participation in drinking and other activities.

Ed Farmer consumed an excessive quantity of alcohol over a two-hour period and was seen to be unable to walk unaided. He was taken back to the home of a second-year student, was checked regularly and found to be snoring loudly. He did not vomit. In the early hours of the morning, he was found to be unresponsive and taken by car to the Royal Victoria Infirmary, in the belief that this would hasten his arrival at hospital.

Ed Farmer died due to a hypoxic brain injury because of prolonged cardio-respiratory arrest.

Following an inquest into Ed's death, the coroner concluded that there was a risk of future deaths occurring because of participation in initiation events, unless action is taken.

The coroner raised the following as key matters for concern: the overwhelming majority of students neither knew nor understood the inherent risks associated with the consumption of large quantities of alcohol within a short period of time, and specifically did not know that snoring is an indicator of respiratory depression.

The coroner recommended that this be addressed in the following ways:

- Provide an induction for all first-year students covering the risks of consuming alcohol in large quantities; guidance on caring for those who are drunk, and explanation of the correlation between initiation events and a heightened risk of serious harm, injury or death.
- Reinforce induction messages at the beginning of each academic year.
- Provide training for all academic staff to enable them to reinforce the messages above and to be vigilant of banned activities or events.
- Effectively implement a prohibition on initiation events.

The coroner additionally called for a national campaign on the:

- Inherent risks of alcohol consumption within a short period
- Identification of people at risk
- Importance of timely medical intervention¹

¹ The Secretary of State for Education 2018-19, Damien Hinds, tasked the Department for Education to work with the education and health sectors to launch a national campaign of this nature.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

Following the advice of the coroner, a national roundtable was held on 26 June 2019, chaired by Professor Chris Day at Newcastle University. This meeting involved national stakeholders within and outside the higher education sector to consider current evidence on initiations and to develop recommendations to guide universities in mitigating the risks inherent in initiation events, as well as other social activities involving excessive alcohol consumption or other risky behaviours. The roundtable also explored how to change attitudes and behaviours towards such activities.

Recognising the need for a coherent approach to these low-prevalence but high-impact events, the group agreed a consensus statement on problem initiations and indicated several examples of emerging good practice

In particular, the group signalled the work of Newcastle University following Ed's death as exemplary.



CONSENSUS STATEMENT

The number of problem initiations that result in serious harm or death is low, but the impact of each incident is significant, with far-reaching effects on families, friends and the wider university community. It may not be only physical harms that occur during these activities, and it is important that the psychological impact is equally recognised.

Student participation in activities that involve excessive alcohol consumption and other dangerous or abusive behaviours needs attention from all institutions, to avoid further serious harm or death. Institutions have a duty of care to students, as well as a more extensive interest in their safety and welfare.

The risks associated with initiations and related activities can be managed and mitigated through coherent and visible disciplinary policies, combined with health education and behavioural initiatives, the latter being essential to embedding and sustaining changes in attitudes towards initiations.

Each institution, including its students' union, athletic union, clubs, societies and sports departments, should review its policies and disciplinary processes relating to initiations to improve their coherence and visibility, and set clear definitions of unacceptable behaviours and activities. At the same time, institutions should explore and implement emerging effective practice regarding health education and literacy on risky behaviours regarding alcohol consumption and interventions to combat cultures of abuse.

We look forward to engaging with the recipients of this briefing in implementing these recommendations across the sector, to support an overall cultural change regarding attitudes towards participation in initiation events and other social activities involving excessive alcohol consumption and other risky behaviours.

Signatories:

Association of Chief Security Officers (AUCSO)

Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE)

British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS)

Challenging Hazing and Negative Group Events in Sport (CHANGES), University of Chester

Department for Education

Department of Health and Social Care (Healthy Behaviours Team: Drugs and Alcohol)

Good Lad Initiative

Home Office (Drugs and Alcohol Unit)

Newcastle University

Newcastle University Students' Union

National Union of Students (NUS)

Public Health England (Health Improvement: Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco & Justice Division)

Universities UK (UUK)

Wonkhe

BACKGROUND

What are initiations?

ANY ACTIVITIES EXPECTED OF SOMEONE JOINING OR PARTICIPATING IN A GROUP THAT HUMILIATES, DEGRADES, ABUSES OR ENDANGERS THEM, REGARDLESS OF A PERSON'S WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE

HOOVER, POLLARD, 1999:8

Initiations are often narrowly considered to be the type of activity that takes place at the beginning of term, during induction or freshers' week. However, the problem behaviours seen in initiations might also feature as routine elements of a society's regular social calendar, with toxic culture and moments of heightened danger persisting through to end-of-year celebrations, annual general meetings, Christmas parties, presentation nights, alumni dinners, varsity matches, and similar sports and social gatherings.

Initiations are not always harmful or inappropriate. It is the inappropriate and/or dangerous behaviours that are often involved in events of this kind that make them harmful and risky. It may not be only physical dangers that occur during these activities, and it is important that the psychological impact is equally emphasised in definitions of problem initiations.

Definitions of problem initiations should focus on the prohibited activities and behaviours. This is to ensure that any event or activity that could reasonably be perceived as involving coercion or manipulation, and that results in a risk or occurrence of physical or mental detriment to students or other parties, can be understood to be an initiation, regardless of whether it has been labelled as such by the group, and regardless of what time of the year it takes place.

This should include activities where risky behaviour is expected or normalised, regardless of an individual's apparent willingness to participate.

Prevalence

There is relatively little research looking at initiations in the UK. The prevalence of these activities, especially problem initiations, may be difficult to assess, in part because they break university disciplinary codes and so remain covert, but also because there is variation in the way in which institutions define and sanction initiations.

Regardless of the numbers, initiation activities carry high risks for those who participate. Although the prevalence of initiations resulting in serious harm or death is very low in higher education student populations in the UK, each death is significant and tragic, with lasting effects on families, friends and the wider university community.

Persistence

Despite previous efforts to ban initiations and/or educate students on the risks involved in problem initiations in the UK, students continue to engage in these behaviours. Several factors may have contributed to the persistence of problem initiations and related activities in the higher education sector.

Students may continue to believe that initiations are positive activities that build team spirit, develop bonds and enhance cohesion (Kowalski, Waldron, 2009). However, it seems likely that students do not actually believe that problem initiations are positive. Individually, students may hold conflicting opinions about initiations, but the influence of groupthink may encourage the persistence of the narrative that such events have a positive purpose (Lafferty, Wakefield, Brown, 2016).

Evidence also shows that there may be confusion and a lack of knowledge about what constitutes inappropriate initiation activities and behaviours (Allen, Madden, 2008). Students may not recognise that the behaviours enacted at some university initiation events are harmful and inappropriate; and may have to some extent normalised these behaviours. It may also be the case that some student group leaders believe that an individual's willingness or consent to take part in an activity designed to degrade or humiliate makes it acceptable.

While it is evident that excessive alcohol consumption is a key feature of problem initiation events, it is only one factor contributing to the overall persistence of risky organised student social activities such as initiations. Institutions that have looked to tackle problem initiations in the past have largely defined them with a focus on the misuse of alcohol. This may lead students to be unaware of other harmful behaviours associated with initiations and may have contributed to the continued persistence of initiations and related activities in the higher education sector (Lafferty et al, 2016).

Institutions that developed policies on initiation events have often adopted a zero-tolerance approach to initiation events. However, not all events labelled as initiations are inherently bad: it is the inappropriate and/or dangerous behaviours that are sometimes involved that make them risky. A blanket zero-tolerance approach can push activities into private spaces, such as off-campus accommodation, and so making them more dangerous.

Online harm

The features of problem initiations and related activities increasingly play out online via social media and other internet-enabled communications. Although the experience of most university students with technology is useful and positive, the use of online media to harass and/or coerce people is a growing concern for students and universities. This behaviour can have severe and long-term repercussions for physical, emotional and mental wellbeing and affect academic achievement and career prospects. Even so, for many young people, this behaviour is embedded in their digital lives and to some extent is normalised and expected, emerging as part of the wider dynamic of their peer group and intimate relationships. Online harm is a relatively new concern for the sector, and the delay in understanding how young people interact online may have contributed to the persistence of initiations.

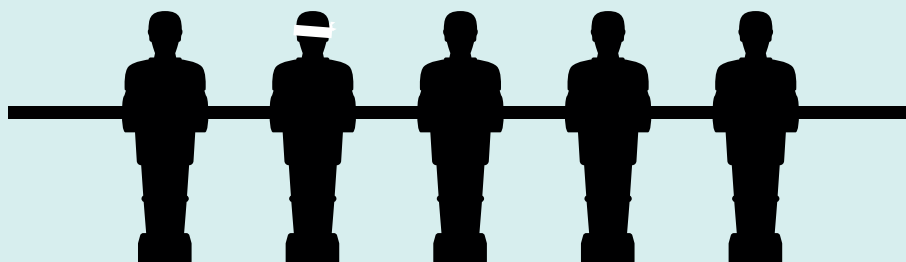
Understanding the growing concern of online harm is an important component to consider when developing effective strategies to challenge problem initiations and related behaviours. The CHANGES Intervention includes a section on social media as part of its workshop, and UUK has developed [guidance](#) to support the sector in responding to online harassment and promoting online welfare among students.

Demographic

For reasons already noted, it remains difficult to assess the nature of participation in problem initiations. There is a tendency in public narratives to perceive problem initiations as occurring predominantly within sports clubs and among young men: research has largely focused on male sports teams, and problem initiation events that reach the UK press are most often those that relate to male societies and sports clubs. This makes it difficult to determine whether problem initiations are truly sport-centred and/or gendered.

However, some research into UK sports teams suggests that while men and women did not have different levels of engagement in appropriate team-building activities, they did tend to hold differing views about unacceptable initiation activities, with female sports players engaging less in inappropriate behaviours (Lafferty et al, 2016). While we certainly see more high-risk activities reported in the press from male students, similar reports of problem initiations have emerged from women's sports team and society initiations too (Davies, 2016).

While alcohol is not the only feature of problem initiation events, it is certainly a common component. Group activities that are alcohol centred may of course exclude students who do not drink. Legal and cultural differences to alcohol consumption contribute to a divide between British and international students, who often do not wish to assimilate into alcohol-centric student cultures in the UK.



FEATURES OF PROBLEM INITIATIONS

What are problem initiations?

Common inappropriate and/or dangerous activities or behaviours associated with initiations include, but are not limited to:

- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Substance misuse
- Bullying, harassment and power inequality, often used as means to coerce participation in challenges and other risky behaviours designed to humiliate
- Sexualised behaviour

It is important that strategies to tackle problem initiations consider how these features interact with one another.

Alcohol

The excessive consumption of alcohol in a short period of time, along with the inability to identify someone in need of medical intervention, were the contributing factors that resulted in the death of Ed Farmer.

There is growing recognition that students' alcohol consumption may affect many aspects of university life, such as their health and wellbeing, academic achievement or may even cause them to drop out of university.

16 to 24 year olds in the UK are more likely not to drink alcohol than their older counterparts

More than a quarter of 16 to 24 year olds do not drink

compared with just over a fifth of the broader adult population. But while young people (16–24) are increasingly likely to be teetotal, drinkers in this age category were also more likely to binge drink (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2017).¹

Women aged 16 to 24 were more likely than any other group to have binged

in the week prior to the survey: 41% admitting to doing so, compared with 34% of men of the same age (ONS, 2017).

¹ The ONS report follows the Department of Health's definition of binge drinking as men who exceed eight units of alcohol on their heaviest drinking day, and women who exceed six units.

Drinking behaviour

Young people in the UK may come to university with expectations about drinking behaviour or may start university with established habits of consuming high levels of alcohol. There may be pressure on students on arrival, to conform to these stereotypes (John, 2010).

A recent study has indicated that university athletes in the UK reported engaging in or witnessing more inappropriate initiation activities than those in a similar study in the United States. This may be surprising, given that historically, problem initiations (or hazing, as it is known in the USA), are associated with the United States' academic fraternity and sporting culture.

The fact that UK students engage in more drinking-related activities than their US counterparts, due to both legal and cultural differences, has been given as a reason why problem initiations persist in the UK (Lafferty et al, 2016).

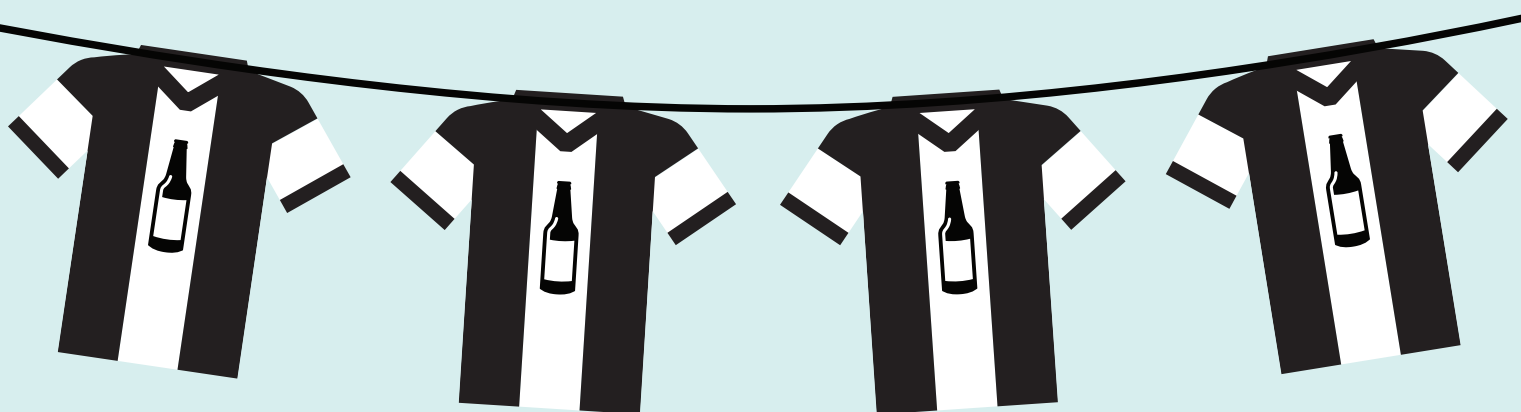
Local licensees can also contribute to fostering harmful attitudes and drinking behaviours. Local Licensing teams can influence this through their local Statement of Licence Policy and trade engagement. For example, Newcastle City Council has worked with licenced premises in the city centre to discourage the practice of proxy orders whereby patrons can buy large quantities of alcohol in advance of others arriving.



Sports teams

Sports teams being in receipt of alcohol sponsorship has been associated with higher levels of alcohol consumption, and higher likelihood of both hazardous and dependent drinking (O'Brien 2014) (Brown 2016). It would be advisable for policymakers and sports administrators to consider whether the potential long-term harms outweigh the financial benefits of alcohol brand sponsorship (O'Brien, 2014).

The UK's chief medical officers have produced [alcohol drinking guidelines](#), which provide the public with information about the health risks of different levels and patterns of drinking (Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), 2016). As well as including advice on safe weekly levels of drinking, the guidelines also highlight the harms faced by people who drink high levels of alcohol within a single day and include advice on single-occasion drinking.



Alternatives

The government's recent **Green Paper** emphasises that increasing the availability of alcohol-free and low-alcohol products may steer the general drinking population towards lower strength alternatives (HM Government, 2019). Universities and other educational establishments should consider increasing the availability of alcohol-free and low-alcohol products in their students' union bars to encourage students to establish sensible drinking habits.

While it is evident that alcohol is a key feature in initiation events – in high-profile cases the institutional and national debate has usually centred on this aspect – it is also evident from the research that alcohol is only one factor contributing to the overall picture of risky organised student social activities such as initiations.

Substance misuse

There is anecdotal evidence in the press to suggest, with drinking and/or 'secret' societies as examples, that drug misuse is a component of events related to these student groups (Pattinson, Leo, 2018), although strong evidence for this is lacking. However, universities do need to be equipped to respond to broader issues of drug misuse.

In 2018, the NUS, in collaboration with **Release** (the national centre of expertise on drugs and drug law), surveyed 2,180 UK-based students on their attitudes and experiences of drugs (NUS, Release, 2018) and published the following key findings.

56% of respondents reported having used drugs at some point.

56% (82) of institutions, at least, can discipline students for behaviour that is not a criminal offence.

16% (24) of institutions incorrectly advise students that the use of drugs is a criminal offence.

- Respondents tended to disagree that institutions' drug policies do not do enough to punish students who use drugs, with 40% of respondents saying they wouldn't feel comfortable disclosing information about their drug use because of fear of punishment.
- Students also highlighted that the types of support institutions made available were not the ones students were most satisfied with, nor the ones they tended to access.

The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and the University of Buckingham published a **joint analysis** on student drug misuse with responses from 1,059 full-time undergraduate students, and which found that far fewer students used drugs than in the NUS survey: 29% compared with 56%. It also found that most students wanted universities to take a tougher stance on the issue, in contrast with the NUS's recommendation that universities take a less punitive approach (HEPI, 2018).

Evidently, more research needs to take place in order to properly understand students' attitudes towards and experiences with drugs before recommendations can be made for intervention and support.

Bullying, harassment and power inequalities

Universities are committed to tackling harassment occurring among students. In 2016 UUK published *Changing the Culture* which set out a strategic framework to support universities in addressing harassment and hate incidents/crime. However, bullying and harassment and power inequalities remain a key concern in the sector, and problem initiations and related activities can contribute to a culture of harassment and intolerance.

Bullying and harassment may be used to encourage participation in initiation and related activities. Initiations often take place when players join a team or society: this progression from outsider to accepted in-group member is described as a rite of passage (Campo, Poulos, Sipple, 2005), during which new members may be subjected to degrading activities designed to embarrass, humiliate, and physically and mentally abuse them prior to acceptance into the team (Nuwer, 2004).

Typically, power inequalities in initiations and related events see older students encouraging and/or coercing younger students to participate in inappropriate and/or dangerous initiation activities, but a less obvious component that may contribute to the persistence of problem initiations is the role of alumni. Alumni can contribute to the continuation of inappropriate and/or dangerous activities in the name of ‘tradition’: alumni who speak with students about their own experiences of joining a team, club or society often perpetuate the importance of these traditions (Alldridge, Broad, Taylor, Zahra, 2018; Wintrup, 2011).

Research suggests that, while young people likely do not believe that initiations, and particularly those featuring dangerous and risky behaviours, are a positive activity (Waldron, Kowalski, 2009), groupthink and the enhancement that accompanies power inequalities within a group may be encouraging the persistence of the narrative that such events have a positive purpose (Lafferty et al, 2016; Athletic Union, University of Southampton Student’s Union, 2003). Thus, the idea of ‘choosing’ to participate is diminished both by students’ internal driving factors, such as the desire to be accepted, and is exacerbated by the bullying and peer pressure used by others to encourage risky behaviours (ibid).

The types of activities seen in problem initiations and related events are often posed as challenges, forfeits or bets. A wide range of activities are encouraged, including excessive consumption of alcohol, forced consumption of unsafe or unpalatable substances, criminal activity, and sexualised behaviour.

‘Task performance’ appears to play a key role in initiations and seeks to test just how far an individual is prepared to go ‘for the team’; tasks and challenges are often dangerous, humiliating or unpleasant, and while students are often told that they can opt out of a dare or challenge, performance in these tasks marks someone out as being loyal and heroic – someone who is prepared to ‘go the extra mile’ for the group. Opting out could bring social exclusion, whereas opting in can bring rewards.

Bullying is not only a means of forcing¹ someone to take part in risky activities: it is also an encouraged activity in itself. Several of the problem behaviours seen in initiation events that have reached the press have included examples of sexist (Phipps, Young, 2013), homophobic (Benn, 2016), anti-Semitic (Courtney, 2008), and other kinds of discriminatory attitudes and actions as an integral part of the event.

¹ The term ‘forcing’ is used to emphasise that bullying, harassment, coercion and control are key features of problem initiation behaviours: individuals feel pressurised or believe that they ‘must’ participate in order to be accepted into a particular group or in order not to ‘lose face’ among peers or friends.

Sexualised behaviours

Sexualised behaviour seen in initiations and related activities have included acts of public nudity and challenges centred on sexist and/or homophobic ideas, such as students ‘dared’ to degrade themselves, or to sexually assault or degrade others. Although they have an element of sexualised behaviour, these actions are not about sex or sexuality per se: they are another means of exerting power over others in the group.

‘Lad culture’ has been described as a pack mentality embedded in campus activities such as sport, heavy alcohol consumption, and ‘banter’ that is often disrespectful, sexist, misogynistic and homophobic. At its most extreme, lad culture involves rape-supportive attitudes, sexual harassment and violence (Phipps, Young, 2013; Buchanan, 2013). It has been linked to a broader culture of sexual objectification among young people and has also been shown to be connected to social problems such as sexual harassment and violence (Levy, 2006).



It has been highlighted that the term ‘lad culture’ itself is potentially problematic, as it implies a homogeneity and cohesiveness that may not necessarily be found across communities or over time, and suggests such behaviours have inherent links to men and masculinity.

(Phipps, Young, 2015)

The term could also create the impression that the behaviour typically associated with it is trivial, or lead to an assumption that misogyny, racism and homophobia are specific to an alcohol/sporting culture when in fact these are present across all cultures and demographics (UUK, 2016).

Extracurricular activities and sports have been singled out as key locations for the spread of ‘lad culture’ on campuses, with sexism in such environments having the potential to escalate into sexual harassment and humiliation (NUS 2013:43–44). Nightlife was described in similar terms, with many participants in the NUS’ research related experiences of sexual molestation and identifying pressure to engage in a high frequency of sexual activity with different partners (ibid:45–47). Participants also reported misogynist jokes and so-called ‘banter’ circulating in their friendship groups which made them feel uncomfortable (ibid:48).

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIVERSITY RESPONSE BE?

There are two key areas of work to consider when looking to tackle problem initiations and related activities. The risks associated with these events can be managed and mitigated firstly through improvements to institutions' policies and processes, and secondly with health education and behavioural initiatives that promote long-term culture change in relation to alcohol consumption, and bullying, harassment and inequality in the sector.

A university's obligations and duty of care

Problem initiations and their associated risky behaviours are at odds with the sector's values and the standards of behaviour expected of students. They also affect an institutions' duty of care to students.

Although universities do not have the same statutory duty for safeguarding their students as colleges and schools have, they do have a duty of care to ensure that students have a safe environment in which they can live, work and study. This duty of care applies whether students are physically present on campus, in student accommodation, undertaking placements or overseas study, participating in sports or social activities away from campus, or studying online (UUK, 2017:14).

These obligations arise out of contract, a duty of care at common law, and legislation that places statutory duties on universities to safeguard the interests of their students in particular circumstances including the Equality Act 2010. The Act makes it unlawful for a university to discriminate, harass or victimise prospective, registered or former students on the grounds of a characteristic protected by the Act, or to fail to anticipate and put in place reasonable adjustments to avoid students with protected characteristics being treated less favourably.



Additional statutory obligations of universities to students include:

- Ensuring a student's human rights under the Human Rights Act 1998
- Ensuring that students are not placed at risk of foreseeable harm under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Specific obligations to ensure that students are not radicalised under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Ensuring that students do not have their data rights breached under the Data Protection Act 2018

The legal framework created by the above legislation and the underlying general duty of care, created towards staff and students at common law, require universities to be mindful of the risks of breaching this duty.

The extent of a university's duties in respect of student wellbeing has not been tested in the courts and whether a duty of care arises, or has been breached, will depend on the facts of a case. However, as the law in this area is continually developing, there is the potential for a precedent to be established.

The institutional–student contract legally binds the university to a duty of care related to the provision of education and support services. Should a student become the subject of abuse, or at risk of abuse, the institution needs to be able to demonstrate due diligence, for example through the use of well-defined acceptable usage policies, appropriate monitoring approaches and effective staff training to recognise and support those students who are at risk.

The extent of the duty placed on a university for a student may be increased where a student is regarded as a vulnerable person. This could be because a student is aged under 18, or due to a student's mental or physical disabilities.¹

Students' unions, as charities, also have a duty of care to their members and are expected to safeguard them. Even where activities take place under the auspices of the students' union, the university retains a responsibility for student conduct. As far as possible, policies and procedures of affiliated or regulated student groups (attached either to the university or the students' union) should establish that their actions are carried out as representatives of the institution or students' union. This highlights the need for a cross-institution approach to the response to, and potential disciplinary action for, initiations and related activities in order to ensure responsibilities are appropriately met.

There should be a greater clarity on universities' duty of care towards students participating in initiations and related events in the sector's disciplinary processes. While universities cannot and should not seek to control students' behaviours, there are several actions that a university can take to support students to make safer decisions and to set expectations for standards of conduct within the student community, with appropriate disciplinary processes and sanctions as a useful means to dissuade problem initiations.

¹ As an example, The Care Act 2014 defines a vulnerable adult as one who:

- has needs for care and support (whether the authority is meeting any of those needs)
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it

Policy and process

Policies are invaluable, in that they set clear standards for students and equally set standards for institutional intervention. However, available research and comments from roundtable attendees highlighted key issues with institutional policies on initiations – primarily, that few institutions currently have an explicit policy on initiations.

Where policies do exist, they tend to focus on activity that involves coercion or force, and physical harm. Approaches that recognise that the risky features of initiations are often expected and normalised, and that acknowledge that these features can cause mental as well as physical harm, are likely to be more effective.

Policies on initiations tend to define them narrowly and to adopt a zero-tolerance approach. This approach to initiations and similar activities has been shown to be an inadequate response to tackling these types of behaviours. A purely punitive approach can serve to move initiations and the associated risky behaviours away from campus into the community or into private spaces such as student apartments. This increases the risks, making it more difficult to keep students safe or to protect the reputation of the institution. Policies should specify that the duty of care to students applies regardless of where the activity takes place.

Partnership working

Many partner agreements, such as student contract and code of conduct do not include explicit reference to initiations. These agreements should reference expected behaviours when engaging in social activities, such as initiations. They should set out the university's stance on these events and clearly link this stance to disciplinary processes and sanctions. Policies and processes must ensure a good balance between establishing expectations for behaviour and allowing students sufficient and appropriate autonomy and choice. Policies should make clear to students that while they are members of the university (including its students' unions, societies and sports clubs), they are representatives of the institution and that activities can and should be risk assessed and regulated.

Although it is groups of students and their culture that lead to problem initiation activities, punishable acts in disciplinary policies are often applied to individuals. Policies and systems need to be more prepared to hold groups of students responsible for their actions.



Many cases of dangerous initiations are related to student sports clubs, but often these are accountable to the students' union or to sports departments that operate their own disciplinary codes and that are somewhat independent of the main university processes. Greater symmetry across definitions, processes and sanctions across departments, students' unions and the university can ensure problem initiations do not go unnoticed, unrecorded or unpunished. Given that students' unions and universities both have legal responsibilities towards their members, both should have confidence in each other's procedures and data should be shared appropriately.

It is often the case that individuals such as alumni, junior staff and students in other clubs or societies are aware of problem initiation activity but do not report it. Policies should clearly indicate the appropriate methods of reporting, and make it clear that, regardless of whether directly involved or not, individuals can and should also use these systems to report such activity.

Whenever a case on problem initiations emerges, there can be pushback from the students involved and their parents. Just as with sexual misconduct, investigating incidences of problem initiations require a nuanced response. Guidance from Pinsent Masons on handling student disciplinary issues in which the behaviour may constitute a criminal offence (UUK, Pinsent Masons, 2016) provides a framework to support the sector in investigating complex and sensitive incidents and in the factors to consider when applying sanctions. UUK is also working with Coventry University to develop a case management process. Given an effective response to a case is likely to involve many functions within, and across the institution, a case management system will provide support for the whole process end to end.

Health and cultural education

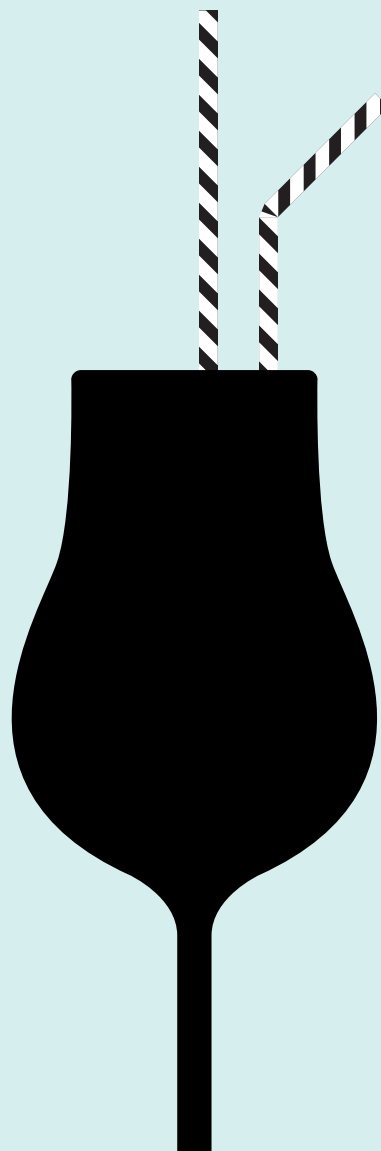
The features of initiations – broadly, alcohol consumption and a culture of bullying and harassment – require a more long-term approach in order to change current attitudes and perceptions. In order to develop effective interventions, strategies to tackle problem initiations must consider how the features of initiations interact with one another.

The sector has undertaken activities in order to reduce problem drinking among students, promote healthier alternatives, and support students with alcohol problems. However, overarching cultural norms continue to dictate attitudes to alcohol consumption across the university, including at senior management level. Successful intervention will rely on the commitment of institutions to delivering interventions and combating mixed messages around alcohol consumption.

Many institutions have taken steps to tackle harassment, hate crime and gender-based violence in the sector, with significant progress (UUK, 2017). However, there is clearly more to be done, particularly in relation to how activities to change the culture on campus can contribute to managing and mitigating the harms of harassment, bullying and power inequalities that manifest in problem initiations and related activities.

Education is the key tool in arming all students with the knowledge of how to stay safe and how to report inappropriate and/or dangerous activities. Universities are ideally placed to raise awareness of the potential harms of initiations and related activities, including the impact on physical and mental health and academic success.

Institutions should work collaboratively across the students' union, sports faculties, and academic and professional services staff to increase knowledge among staff and students in relation to the motivations for initiation-type activity, while also highlighting other ways of bonding. Institutions should ensure that this is supported through policy and disciplinary procedures to promote an environment where coercive behaviour is unacceptable.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations aim to support the higher education sector in mitigating the risks to students of participating in initiation events and other social activities that involve excessive alcohol consumption and other risky behaviours, to support an overall cultural change in attitudes towards problem initiation events and other high-risk social activities.

These recommendations draw on current research and emerging effective practice.

1 Adopt a definition that focuses on prohibited behaviours

Universities adopt a definition of initiations that focuses on defining the problem activities and behaviours that can amount to an initiation, while recognising that there are other events that are not considered to be an ‘initiation’, yet also foster these problem behaviours, such as sports tours, club socials, drinking societies, alumni events and varsity matches.

2 Foster cross-working and a whole-institution approach

Institutions should include preventing and tackling initiations as a component of wider strategic work to tackle harassment, and mental health problems. In particular, we suggest that institutions work closely with the students’ union and athletic union, as well as external agencies, to develop a university-wide strategy that is genuinely cross-institutional. This might involve the establishment of a cross-working committee. British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) can assist in connecting universities with their sports faculties and BUCS representatives.

Reports on incidents and outcomes of all activities that constitute initiations, as well as progress reports on activities undertaken to prevent and respond to this issue, are provided to governing bodies. Having executive-level responsibility and accountability for decision-making can be effective in facilitating a whole-institution approach. Such an approach can also help ensure consistency in the responses to students and is likely to be effective in both reducing incidents and effecting cultural change.

3 Evaluate interventions and share knowledge and good practice

Universities should engage regularly with new evidence and the continuous assessment and evaluation of initiatives. This is particularly important, given that the specific kinds of activities seen in problem initiations will develop and change over time and given that one means of enacting or exacerbating the behaviours can be through social media and technology more generally, which are developing and changing at an extraordinary rate.

Institutions should give consideration to how the features of problem initiations also play out online in order to effectively tackle this dynamic.

Institutions should collect data on how initiations are experienced within cohorts and use this to evaluate and inform their interventions.

Universities should consider establishing a committee whose responsibility is to uphold good cross-working across the institution. This will be beneficial to those involved in researching, preventing and/or responding to problem initiations, and could include academics from relevant fields of study, student support services and the students' union. The committee would be further enhanced by involving those from the local community and specialist support services.

Universities should share knowledge and practice across the institution and across the sector more widely: this can include sharing academic research, student data and good practice initiatives.

4 Update or develop policies and practices and embed them across the university

Policies to address anti-social behaviour and harassment and bullying should make explicit reference to initiation events and the problem features they encompass, to ensure a joined-up approach to defining and responding to such behaviour.

Regulations for students and codes of conduct should state the university's commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students and highlight clearly the behaviours that are expected of students as members of the university community across all settings, along with the consequences and sanctions for failing to adhere to these standards.

All policies should be accessible and clearly communicated to students and staff.

Universities may also wish to be explicit in stating that internal investigations rely on a civil (i.e., a balance of probability) level of evidence, rather than 'beyond reasonable doubt' as is the case for criminal law, in order to encourage more students to report.

All policies should be regularly reviewed and updated, with input from a range of stakeholders, and adapted to reflect any emerging trends and disciplinary data.

5 Ensure proportionate disciplinary processes and sanctions are in place

The sector should move away from a zero-tolerance approach to initiations: a purely zero-tolerance, punitive approach is ineffective, and can lead institutions to do very little to tackle the issue since, because initiations are banned, there is an assumption that they are not taking place.

Institutions should review their disciplinary procedure and protocols for dealing with such activities and clarify with students and staff the sanctions that apply for disregarding these.

Disciplinary processes and sanctions should be agreed and owned jointly across the institution and its students' union. Where possible, universities should look to develop this as a single, coherent policy and process for investigating and disciplining those involved in problem initiation activities and apply it across the institution, students' and athletic unions, and sports faculty/ies.

6 Provide clear reporting systems and advertise support available

Students should have access to a range of accessible methods to disclose or report inappropriate and/or dangerous initiation and related events. Universities may wish to consider offering an option for a student to make an anonymous report. Confidentiality should be clearly stated and ensured as far as possible to prevent further distress to the reporting student (Chakraborti, Lopez-Menchero, 2018).

Reporting systems should be advertised across the institution, ensuring they reach all members of student and staff bodies. Students should also be made aware of external reporting and support options

Universities UK recommends collaborating with Professor Mira Lafferty of the University of Chester and the CHANGES Intervention and the Good Lad Initiative to empower students to hold each other to account for inappropriate and dangerous behaviours. These programmes include work to encourage students to not be bystanders, and to equip them with the tools necessary to have an honest discussion among their teams and groups about inappropriate and dangerous behaviours, to bring about informal resolution, or if necessary, the confidence to report.

7 Raise awareness of initiations and their risks among student and staff cohorts

Universities should consider exploring how current activities to change the culture of harassment, hate crime and gender-based violence on campus can be best utilised to raise awareness of and change perceptions to the features of problem initiations.

The sector, with support and contributions from partners and specialist services, should further explore the kinds of messages around alcohol consumption that have been effective among young people and look to use these in awareness-raising campaigns.

Universities UK recommends using the resources made available by the NUS through its Alcohol Impact accreditation in order to implement training and awareness-raising initiatives to challenge prevailing attitudes towards alcohol consumption.

Awareness-raising and training activities should point out the signs of dangerous consumption of alcohol. In the case of Ed Farmer, the coroner believed that the inability to identify people in need of medical intervention was a contributing factor that resulted in his death.

Interventions should be developed and administered at key points in a student's time at university (e.g. UCAS application, open days, induction days, enrolment and re-enrolment).

8 Implement staff training

There should be a strategic approach to staff training that identifies the levels and content of training for different categories of staff, from general awareness to the more detailed skills required from first responders. The way that problem initiations manifest and can be managed varies across institutions. Therefore, a risk assessment of current training provision in the institution to identify gaps in training content and in who attends and uses the training available would be a welcome first step in developing a tailored training plan that is most feasible and useful to an individual institution.

Institutions should encourage staff to report any activities that may be inappropriate or dangerous, and that all staff are made aware of the processes used to report such activities.

9 Work with local councils, licensees and partners to ensure the campus environment and surrounding areas promote responsible behaviours towards drinking

Institutions should consider how local businesses contribute to fostering the harmful behaviours seen at problem initiation events. Licensing differs across UK regions and these differences can contribute to exacerbating excessive drinking among students. Developing a good relationship between a university, licensed spaces and local councils can help to mitigate the risks involved in the excessive consumption of alcohol.

Institutions should consider how their campus environment may affect the likelihood of problem initiation activities taking place. For example, a university with majority private halls may be more at risk of problem initiations than a collegiate university due to the increased staff presence in the latter. Interventions should be tailored to account for this. Institutions could consider monitoring local intelligence on anti-social behaviour and related activities in the community in order to better tailor interventions to the specific institution.¹

Institutions should consider their relationship with promoters and alcohol-industry sponsorship: are their messages about drinking in line with the values of the institution? Institutions should strive only to work with partners who share appropriate messages about drinking, and who do not promote excessive alcohol consumption through cheap deals, for example.

Students' unions have a pivotal role in both the problem and the potential solutions for excessive student drinking. Universities UK recommends that institutions support their students' unions in identifying alternative funding streams. Commercial issues for students' unions are perceived as a driver for maintaining high alcohol sales on campus (John, 2010).

10 Work with alumni

Universities should engage their alumni networks in the development and execution of activities to tackle initiations.

Universities should ensure that alumni are aware of reporting systems, and work with their alumni networks to encourage an increased sense of responsibility for the safety of student groups or societies of which they were once a part.

¹ For more information about implementing such a strategy, see the contact information for Richard Yates in the 'roundtable attendees' section.

EMERGING PRACTICE

Excessive alcohol consumption, bullying, harassment and power inequalities, and an inconsistent approach across the sector are the key features identified that contribute to the persistence of problem initiations and related events. This section offers examples of emerging practice initiatives that are available to support institutions in tackling the various features that contribute to the persistence of social activities such as initiations that promote risky behaviours among university students.



NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT INITIATIONS GROUP



Following the inquest into the death of student Ed Farmer, Newcastle University established a Student Initiations Group to consider how to tackle the problem of dangerous initiations, taking into account the specific recommendations of the coroner.

In order to tackle the problem, the university recognised the importance of collaborating across the institution with the students' union and other key partners such as faculty and professional services staff, representatives of student clubs and societies, and alumni. In taking a holistic approach, the group established several cross-institutional workstreams to make recommendations relating to the following themes.

Values, definitions and principles

The group understood that it was important for a definition of initiations to focus on prohibited behaviours, but to also include activities that are reasonably perceived to involve coercion or manipulation and that result in a risk of physical or mental detriment to students or other parties.

The definitions, principles and values set apply to all Newcastle University students, whether or not they are members of an affiliated students' union, society or club. They also apply to relevant activities that may affect or involve others (for example visiting or prospective students, or young people from other organisations, and off-campus activities such as post-match celebrations or competitions) to ensure the widest range of activities that may feature inappropriate and/or dangerous activities are captured.

Training and awareness for students, staff and society officers

Training and awareness activities have been developed by the Student Progress Service, Newcastle University Students' Union, BUCS and sports staff, with a focus on highlighting the risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption, the motivations for initiation-type activity, and the promotion of other ways of bonding, supported by policies and disciplinary procedures to foster an environment where coercive behaviour is unacceptable.

An action plan of activities to train and raise awareness among students and staff has been established, recognising the importance of developing greater understanding of initiations and the related risks at all levels of the institution.

Disciplinary protocols and sanctions

Newcastle University and Newcastle University Students' Union worked closely together to agree a shared protocol and gain clarity on sanctions and charges related to unacceptable behaviours at social events, including initiations.

A briefing on the new protocol and code of conduct will be included as part of the extensive training and responsibilities for clubs and societies. This includes a requirement for society officers to commit to adhering fully to the provisions of the code of conduct in the organisation of social events or activities.

Reporting and supporting

Newcastle University has invested in a reporting system that allows for anonymous reporting, to encourage people to come forward with concerns around coercive behaviours. Information from the system will support the university in better understanding the breadth and depth of initiation-type behaviour, as well as informing training and awareness programmes.

Relationships with the city council, police and licensing authorities

The university has been working with Newcastle City Council, Northumbria Police, licensing organisations and other external bodies to raise awareness of the issues associated with excessive alcohol consumption, focusing on increasing awareness and the enforcement of regulations governing licensed premises where alcohol is sold, for example, to visibly drunk customers, and also the practice of proxy sales where customers can buy alcoholic drinks on behalf of others.

Where concerns have been raised regarding licensing laws not being followed, the police have been working with bar staff to increase their awareness of customers' vulnerability and to ensure that they remain compliant with licensing laws.

The police have developed a **virtual reality experience** where students are able to test their ability to spot alcohol-related physical and emotional hazards, both for themselves and others. The experience allows students to trial a variety of decisions in a safe environment and will be available for all undergraduates during the university's professional services health fair.

For more information, contact:

Angela McNeill
Head of Student Progress Service
angela.mcneill@ncl.ac.uk

Sally Ingram
Director of Student Health
and Well-being Services
sally.ingram@ncl.ac.uk

Lindsey Lockey
Director of Membership & HR,
Newcastle University Students' Union
dmhr.union@ncl.ac.uk

NUS ALCOHOL IMPACT



nus Alcohol Impact
Accredited institution

Alcohol Impact is a whole-institution programme conceived by the NUS to create the conditions for a social norm of responsible alcohol consumption by students. It is a strategic framework and supported accreditation mark that is designed to bring students' unions and institutions together in partnership.

Institutions and their respective students' unions can sign up to the programme at any point in the academic year to begin working through the criteria to gain accreditation. The **criteria** cover a range of different issues across campus and within the wider community and include: knowledge and understanding; collaboration, commitment and intent; norms and framing; policy and operations; impact and outcomes; engagement and outreach; and interventions.

The NUS also have an online toolkit to work through. This is supported by resources, advice and examples of good practice, including case studies on alcohol-free events, awareness-raising initiatives, working with university staff, and working with external agencies.

To date, 31 universities have participated in Alcohol Impact, delivering a broad array of actions that collectively help to change student attitudes and behaviours on alcohol consumption. Case studies are available to support institutions and students' unions.

Each institution undertakes several more ambitious interventions, such as the creation of alcohol-free spaces across campus, delivering alcohol identification and brief advice (IBA) and working with sports team and the local community.

Partnerships take one to three years to complete the programme. When they are ready, an external audit of the institution and students' union takes place to assess their performance for accreditation.

The NUS trains student auditors to conduct the audit, which takes place over two days and includes a review of evidence and in-depth interviews with staff, officers, external stakeholders and student focus groups. If the criteria have been completed to a satisfactory level, the institution is awarded with the accreditation mark.

The NUS also run an annual Students and Alcohol Conference as a showcase event for Alcohol Impact participants to present their innovative interventions and find ways to collaborate on this agenda.

Outcomes

There is substantive evidence that the programme has led to **reductions in alcohol-related incidents on campus**. Since Alcohol Impact began, participating institutions have seen:

- 50%** increase in the number of non-alcoholic events run during welcome week
- reduction in verbal assaults occurring on a night out
- reduction in incidents of major fighting during nights out
- 40%** decrease in students' exclusion from campus venues due to irresponsible drinking
- 20%** reduction in students being rejected from the union bar due to intoxication and aggression
- reduction in the number of students pre-drinking regularly in halls of residence
- 10%** reduction in anti-social behaviour complaints from the local community

Next steps

The programme aims to have a positive effect on a crucial student welfare issue. Rather than trying to prevent students drinking, it creates a more positive culture of responsible drinking. In order to do so effectively, it is essential that Alcohol Impact develops and evolves according to the sector's needs. For the academic year 2019/20, the NUS will be extending the aim of Alcohol Impact by:

- Rolling out **Drink Rethink** pilots (a preventative approach to reduce high-risk drinking using a behaviour-change tool to deliver student-led interventions on campus)
- Reinvigorating the Alcohol Impact advisory board
- Gathering feedback from auditors and participants
- Enhancing research on students and alcohol consumption
- Exploring further alignment with other target areas (drugs, mental health etc)

Related NUS activities

The NUS also runs campaigns to oppose harmful initiation ceremonies through its work on **bar crawls** and lad culture (NUS, Drinkaware, undated; Phipps, Young, 2013), and the **Best Bar None** accreditation scheme, which is supported by the Home Office and promotes the responsible management and operation of alcohol-licensed premises.

The NUS' portfolio of activities has together generated significant interest, support and momentum on the issue of responsible alcohol consumption by students. This is in part due to the strength of the structure of Alcohol Impact, which creates effective partnerships between students' unions and their institutions. This, coupled with an evidence-based and strategic approach to reversing the social norm of irresponsible consumption, which is grounded in academic theory, is well received by universities.

For more information, contact:

alcoholimpact@nus.org.uk

<https://alcoholimpact.nus.org.uk>

CHALLENGING HAZING AND NEGATIVE GROUP EVENTS IN SPORT



The CHANGES intervention has been developed over the last 10 years from research and applied work in the area by Professor Moira Lafferty (principal investigator and lead developer), Department of Psychology, University of Chester and Associate Professor Caroline Wakefield, Health Sciences, Liverpool Hope University.

CHANGES aims to promote positive team-building and welcome events and to challenge attitudes and behaviours with respect to problem initiation ceremonies, using film clips as its central component. Through observing the films and engaging with workshop tasks, student sport officers learn about the impact of initiations and the physical, psychological and societal risks associated with them.

Designed as a collaborative, proactive intervention, CHANGES works in partnership with sports players and officers to empower them to develop a culture change with respect to welcome events, educate on the dangers and equip participants with the skills necessary to challenge harmful behaviours. Importantly, the CHANGES workshop also provides techniques for ensuring the physical and psychological safety of all members of their teams.

Quality-related research funding of £24,690 from the Department of Psychology, University of Chester has allowed the CHANGES portfolio to develop to include an online version (O-CHANGES) to complement the face-to-face offer. A 'train the trainer' workshop is also available. These developments are allowing greater reach within the sector to ensure that all interventions remain current and retain their cultural and contextual relevance to the UK's student sport sector.

Outcomes

CHANGES has a partnership agreement with BUCS. It has been delivered to over:

800 student sport officers across

14 institutions in the UK

25 University sport managers, officers and staff have been trained to deliver the workshop

50+ student officers have participated in online training.

Testimonials

“ This workshop helped us to tackle some serious themes that could potentially undermine the beneficial aspects of being part of a sports club and allow students to discuss them in a safe environment. We’ve had positive feedback from the students who attended this session, who commented that it was very thought provoking and made them reflect on how new students feel when entering the unfamiliar environment of a new sports club. ”

Anglia Ruskin University

“ These sessions have been well received by students and have ignited some excellent discussion around being proactive with regards to challenging unwanted behaviours within clubs. From the point of view of the Sports Union, we are always looking at ways to enhance student experience and wellbeing. We actively encourage our students, athletes and club leaders to challenge negative behaviours, stereotypes and discrimination. Therefore, the opportunity to be involved in this new BUCS initiative has been fantastic and has provided our students with knowledge and insight that they can take back to their clubs and make a positive impact. ”

University of Edinburgh

“ I am delighted and proud that Worcester is part of this initiative, which has become intrinsic to the BUCS #TakeAStand agenda. We will continue to support it and I would, personally, be very happy to be trained to help deliver CHANGES to a wider audience when that is possible. What you are doing is so important and will, no doubt, contribute to a steady change in culture in student sport across the country. I am convinced that the culture amongst our teams has already changed significantly and the part you have played in that is much appreciated. ”

University of Worcester

Next steps

CHANGES is currently conducting research in order to produce a guide of positive welcome activities that will be developed into a resource pack that will be available to all universities. There are also plans to expand the CHANGES portfolio so it can be offered to non-sporting societies. We welcome the opportunity to work with universities interested in this.

For more information, contact:

Professor Moira Lafferty
Department of Psychology
University of Chester
m.lafferty@chester.ac.uk

BUCS: NEW INITIATIVES TO TACKLE INITIATIONS IN STUDENT SPORT



British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) is the national governing body for higher education sport in the UK, representing some 170 institutions and delivering programmes for over 50 sports.

Initiations have been part of student sport culture for some time. While initiations are not exclusive to sports clubs, they can often be a focal point for misconduct.

The number of complaints made to BUCS regarding initiations from students, parents and national media outlets has increased over the last three years. The incidents have not only started to damage the reputation of the higher education sports sector, but in some sports, there is also evidence to suggest that initiations are proving to be a barrier to entry and also a large cause of drop-out.

BUCS has existing regulations that allow the organisation to take action against universities and individuals for bringing BUCS and higher education sport into disrepute. In addition to enforcing these regulations, BUCS has begun to take the following actions, to aid universities in dealing with incidents and ultimately to discourage this type of behaviour. The following action has been presented to the BUCS board by the CEO.

Actions to date

1 The update of existing BUCS regulations

An appendix was added to the existing regulations to cover initiation-type behaviour and the disciplinary process that would be followed. Action can therefore be taken against the specific students who perpetrated the activity, with the potential to suspend them from BUCS competition for a full year from the date of the disciplinary.

2 Continued work with the CHANGES programme

BUCS has developed a strong link with the CHANGES programme and supported its roll-out across the sector, including the development of online and 'train the trainer' programmes.

3 Ongoing consultation with member institutions

While most members acknowledge the severity and impact of initiations, there is still concern over the role BUCS plays within any disciplinary process. Consultation with members has continued throughout the competition season to understand and address these concerns.

4 Anonymous reporting function through the BUCS website

BUCS is developing an anonymous reporting function, which will enable students and parents to report concerns or evidence of initiations. BUCS can then use this evidence to work with its members to enable investigations to be conducted.

5 Education and training

In addition to the work with CHANGES, a bespoke Bystander Training is being developed, building on the sexual harassment and protective behaviours framework previously funded by HEFCE.

In collaboration with members, a training pack, which can be tailored to suit local delivery, has been developed and circulated to members.

6 Proactive PR and media relations

BUCS will undertake some proactive PR to coincide with welcome weeks and the beginning of the sport season, to push positive messages about the value of sport and physical activity, while also taking greater responsibility for tackling problem initiations, and highlighting the work being done to address this.

7 Leading within the sector

BUCS, as the lead organisation for sport in higher education has a role to play in showing strong and positive leadership, setting the standards for sport in the sector and seeking to encourage and enforce these where necessary.

For more information, contact:

Vince Mayne, CEO

Vince.mayne@bucs.org.uk

www.bucs.org.uk

THE GOOD LAD INITIATIVE



The Good Lad Initiative workshops explore the links between initiations and the wider set of issues that affect university students, for instance, the connection between drinking culture and mental health; why it is that men feel more comfortable opening up about their emotions after a few drinks, and the link between 'black-out' drinking culture and sexual harassment.

The power hierarchies within a team, exacerbated by the incoming cohort of new freshers at the start of a season, exist throughout the entire year. Workshops examine the issues surrounding these power hierarchies, including the social pressures that de-validate the choice to opt out as a genuine option; the lasting negative consequences of intimidation on a group and individual level; and the toxic culture it can create.

Good Lad Initiative workshops often reveal that multiple group members are not comfortable or supportive of what might initially seem like a rigid tradition held by a homogenous group. When spaces outside power hierarchies are provided, there are regularly multiple voices that dissent from initiations and other problematic 'traditions'.

The Good Lad Initiative offers workshops for male-identifying students and can collaborate with other organisations to provide workshops for mixed gender groups.

Our approach

The Good Lad Initiative facilitates one-off or a series of workshops for groups (teams, societies, halls of residence) that consist of interactive exercises and peer-to-peer conversations. These workshops get to the core of a team's culture, citing initiations as just one product of negative group behaviours. What is it about the team's culture that permits and perpetuates these problematic and potentially damaging ways of interacting? The workshop challenges individuals to reflect on where these expectations come from, and how are they related to youth culture, gendered expectations and stereotypes, and their personal sense of identity.

The workshops are informal, engaging and non-confrontational in their approach. Facilitators do not turn up with a set agenda but instead provide participants with a space in which they can express discomfort or objections to the team's culture and initiations. The Good Lad believes that the most effective change comes from group buy-in and a sense of collective responsibility. The Good Lad Initiative's facilitators are also young men, who start the sessions with a personal statement about their own experiences and learning. 'Train the trainer' models are available for universities, enabling the conversations to be as relatable to each different university context and each group as possible.

After discussion, a new framework is developed which allows the group to re-examine its behaviour and to think through better ways of moving forward. Participants are encouraged to see themselves as potential agents of positive change. What are more positive ways of fostering a closely bound, loyal team than initiations? How can we create a culture in which anyone is able to call out problematic behaviour?

For more information, contact:

Dan Guinness
director@goodladinitiative.com
www.goodladinitiative.com

RESOURCES

Alcohol and substance misuse

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Narcotics Anonymous

<https://ukna.org/>

Al-Anon

www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Drinkline 0800 917 8282

Antidote

(LGBT-specific drug and alcohol support)

www.londonfriend.org.uk/get-support/drugsandalcohol

Talk to Frank

www.talktofrank.com

Addiction Helper

www.addictionhelper.com/

Alcohol Learning Centre (ALC)

www.alcohollearningcentre.org.uk/

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholsupport.aspx

Recourse

www.recourse.org.uk

Public Health England

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/drinking

Alcohol Change UK

<https://alcoholchange.org.uk>

Drinkaware

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Drug Science

www.drugscience.org.uk

Addaction

www.addaction.org.uk

DrugWise

www.drugwise.org.uk

The Loop

<https://wearetheloop.org>

England

Turning Point

www.turning-point.co.uk/find-a-service.html

Scotland

Alcohol Focus Scotland

www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/alcohol-information/find-an-alcohol-service

The Scottish Drug Services Directory

www.scottishdrugservices.com

Wales

Welsh Centre for Action

on Dependency and Addiction

www.wcada.org/services.html

24/7 Drugs and Alcohol Helpline

0808 808 2234 or text DAN to 81066

www.dan247.org.uk/

First aid and physical health

St John Ambulance

www.sja.org.uk/sja/first-aid-advice/poisoning/alcohol-poisoning.aspx

British Red Cross Alcohol

and First Aid teaching aids

www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/alcohol-and-first-aid

The Mix Charity

(supporting those under 25 to make informed choices about their physical and mental health)

www.themix.org.uk/drink-and-drugs/drugs-and-your-body/drugs-first-aid-9601.html

Bullying, harassment and intimidation

Support Line
www.supportline.org.uk

Stop Hate
www.stophateuk.org

Union of Jewish Students
www.ujs.org.uk/

Federation of Student Islamic Societies
www.fosis.org.uk/

The Community Security Trust
(national organisation for Jewish victims)
<https://cst.org.uk/>

TELL MAMA
(national organisation for Muslim victims)
<http://tellmamauk.org/>

Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism
www.fairuk.org/intro.htm

Muslim Women's Network
www.mwnhelpline.co.uk

Stop LGBT Hate Crime Helpline
0808 801 0661

Galop the LGBT+ anti-violence charity
www.galop.org.uk/

Imaan (LGBT Muslim)
<http://imaan.org.uk/about/about.htm>

LGBT Foundation
<https://lgbt.foundation>

Stonewall
www.stonewall.org.uk/

The Gender Trust
<http://gendertrust.org.uk/>

Disability Rights UK
www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-canhelp/publications/lets-stop-disability-hate-crime-guidance

Scope (people with disabilities)
www.scope.org.uk

UK Disabled People's Council
www.ukdpc.net/site

Sexual violence

Victim Support
www.victimsupport.org.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales
<http://rapecrisis.org.uk/>

Rape Crisis Scotland
www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/

The Survivors Trust
<http://thesurvivorstrust.org/find-support/>

NHS web Service Search (inputting 'rape and sexual assault referral centre' and the postcode will identify the nearest local service)
www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/

Survivors UK
(men who have been sexually abused)
www.survivorsuk.org/

Mankind
(men who have been sexually abused)
www.mankindcounselling.org.uk/

ROUNDTABLE ATTENDEES

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